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Zen buddhism in tradition, culture and society of Japan

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**Abstract.** Buddhism is Japan's second largest religion, right behind Shinto. It includes multiple traditions and movements, but in Japan, it was domesticated as Zen Buddhism. Buddhism also exists in China, and it is called Chen there. Zen Buddhism has had an impact on Japanese tradition, culture and society as a whole. For example, through Buddhism, samurais despised the fear of death and developed courage, mercy, courtesy, truthfulness and honesty, honour, loyalty and self-control. Then, Zen Buddhism has had a major influence on sports, and this is reflected in martial arts (sports and skills). It is also visible in the rituals associated with the tea ceremony, or in poetry. The very nature of Zen is such that it rejects everything that is secondary, superfluous, imposed, and verbal. The Zen mind is a beginner's mind, which means a mind that is ready to receive new knowledge, to acquire new skills. The Zen containing typically Japanese features summarizes elements of Buddhism from China and India, as well as Japanese ethical and cultural characteristics. The aim of this paper is to show that in addition to the European cultural influence in the world, there is another strong cultural influence that is manifested through religion, philosophy, art and science of the Far East. The subject of this paper is the main characteristics of Zen Buddhism, Zen schools and teachers, as well as the place of Zen Buddhism in the tradition and culture of Japan.

**Keywords:** Zen Buddhism; Japan, tradition; culture; society; East Asia

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Дзен-буддизм в традиции, культуре и обществе Японии

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**Аннотация.** Буддизм является второй по величине религией Японии, сразу после синтоизма. Он включает в себя множество традиций и течений, но в Японии он был одомашнен как дзен-буддизм. Буддизм также существует в Китае, и там его называют Чэнь. Дзен-буддизм оказал влияние на японскую традицию, культуру и общество в целом. Например, благодаря буддизму самураи презирали страх смерти и развивали в себе мужество, милосердие, вежливость, правдивость и честность, благородство, верность и самоконтроль. Затем дзен-буддизм оказал большое влияние на спорт, и это нашло отражение в боевых искусствах (видах спорта и навыках). Это также заметно в ритуалах, связанных с чайной церемонией, или в поэзии. Сама природа дзэн такова, что она отвергает все второстепенное, лишнее, навязанное и словесное. Разум дзэн – это ум начинающего, что означает ум, готовый получать новые знания, приобретать новые навыки. Дзэн, содержащий типично японские черты, суммирует элементы буддизма из Китая и Индии, а также японские этические и культурные особенности. Цель этой статьи – показать, что в дополнение к европейскому культурному влиянию в мире существует еще одно сильное культурное влияние, которое проявляется через религию, философию, искусство и науку Дальнего Востока. Предметом данной статьи являются основные характеристики дзен-буддизма, дзен-школ и учителей, а также место дзен-буддизма в традиции и культуре Японии.

**Ключевые слова:** дзен-буддизм; Япония; традиция; культура; общество; Восточная Азия

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## Introduction.

*It does good  
Avoid evil  
Purify your heart:  
It is the Buddha's Way<sup>1</sup>.*

Religious consciousness in Japan has long been made up of two religions, Buddhism and Shinto. Buddhism was institutionalized from the very beginning and had its own priests, while Shintoism was not<sup>2</sup>. However, the Japanese state used Buddhism and Shintoism in order to achieve its own political goals, and it is a well-known fact that these two religions intertwine and thus complement Japanese religiosity (Japanese Culture and Society. 2021: 73-74). This is characterized by the intertwining of different religious beliefs, which are manifested in the holding of numerous ceremonies, the importance of rituals, but also the influence of the religious on the aesthetic. "It influenced the way of life, homes and gardens arrangement of the Japanese people. It has also influenced the work ethics, transferring to enterprises through loyalty, harmony, peace and silence that are desirable as the production process unfolds. In Japan, more than any other country, everything is subordinate to man, so human resources are the most significant". (Maksimovic, 2017: 87).

Namely, Buddhism was transferred to Japan from China in the 5th century, where it had been well organized and institutionalized. From there, it gradually spread and became the dominant way of the Buddhist teaching in Japan and other East Asian countries. However, Zen Buddhism is a Japanese type of Buddhism. Zen Buddhism was brought to Japan in the Kamakura period (Kamakura tokidai, 1185-1333)<sup>3</sup> as an independent form of Buddhism.

<sup>1</sup>Suzuki & From, 1969: 102.

<sup>2</sup>Shintoism did not have a centralized belief system, nor did the theologians who spread the idea of Shintoism. However, under the influence of Buddhism, Confucian ideas managed to penetrate Shinto ideology and customs, especially in the area of worshiping ancestors and maintaining family kinship.

<sup>3</sup>There is consensus in the literature concerning the year of the beginning of the Kamakura period, as some identify it as 1185 and others point to 1192. In this paper, the year 1185 is taken as the year of the beginning of this

Thus, the philosophy of the Chinese Chan was accepted by Japan in the 12th century, and renamed to Zen. Zen in Japan combined Chinese philosophy and Indian Buddhism, became autonomous and different from its predecessors and as such, is still present today and can be seen at every step in the life of the Japanese. It immediately became the religion of samurais, since its simplicity of teaching suited them (Višnjić-Žižović, 2019: 399, 403). "Furthermore, Zen, as the full and unmediated experience of life itself untainted by cultural accretions, is the ultimate source of all authentic religious teaching, both Eastern and Western" (Sharf, 1993: 1)<sup>4</sup>.

The teachings of the Buddha contributed to the "formation of an administrative-bureaucratic hierarchy" in Japan and the formation of a solid foundation for the entire system of ethics and law. Furthermore, such strong Buddhist norms played an essential role in the founding of Japanese culture. The work of Zen teachers who in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in the times of political unrest and constant struggles, managed to preserve previous cultural achievements and the cultural life of the country, facilitated a further development of art, literature, but theatre, tea ceremonies and haiku poetry (Višnjić-Žižović, 2019: 402-403). So Zen, deviated from the Buddhist doctrines in none of the countries to which it had spread, and has had the goal of enlightenment - gaining a true picture of oneself and the world. Today, there are many doubts about whether Zen Buddhism is a religion or indeed a philosophy, how "metaphysical" it is, and, finally, whether the ancient teachings created "long ago in much different social and spiritual circumstances" can be adequately understood today. All interpretations

period according to Kondashi's history of Japan, printed in Serbia in 2008 (History of Japan, 2008).

<sup>4</sup>Supporters of Japanese Zen even believe that pure Buddhism, as a source of Asian spirituality, has survived only in Japan. Thus, Japan became the inheritor of the spiritual and ethnic heritage of the East. And Zen has been resistant to the Enlightenment criticisms of religion, since not being a religion in the institutional sense, but a rational and scientific way of investigating the nature of things. It is the heart of Asian spirituality and the essence of Japanese culture (Sharf, 1993).

of Zen originate from the Buddha, and its meaning is in teaching silence and acquiring intuitive wisdom, while the interpretation of everyday life originates from the inner “vision of reality”. Zen rejects everything which is instrumentalised, commonly accepted and leads to self-knowledge, or as a form of spirituality, aims at setting the man free from sinfulness. Japanese Zen does not involve established and repetitive answers (Kličković, 2014: 53-54). The experience of the world is an experience in itself, it is personal, authentic and should be unique. Historically, there have been comic and distorted interpretations of Zen, but also repetitions of some rules in an imitative way. Understood in the right way, the world is seen “through the eyes of wisdom” and the real truth is transmitted intuitively and directly, and the words come much later. The purpose and goal of women is to establish a religion as the moral basis of society. The name Zen itself comes from the Sanskrit word “*dhuana*” and means “meditation”. Finding simplicity and calm are what one strives for in a woman. For these reasons, it is no wonder that of all the Japanese and Buddhist schools, Zen is the most represented in the lives of the Japanese, their culture, art, sports and creativity in general. With their parallel existence, Zen Buddhism and Shintoism were not in opposition on the Japanese soil, but their coordinated development existed for centuries. The reason for this has precisely been the nature of women, because it is aimed at the enlightenment of the individual, and not at some particular deity.

Zen came to the West in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through “international elite networks”. Later in the twentieth century, it appeared within the framework of universalisation, psychology and individuation in the development of the concept of “religious experience”. Thus, zen *kōans*, zen stories and zen meditations are interpreted within the framework of mysticism, philosophy and psychology. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Zen was not only

associated with elites, but also with other sections of the population such as thinkers, artists, spiritual seekers, environmental activists and poets. By being interpreted in the West, the original Zen Buddhist concepts have changed, so they have become a mental ideal, or a therapeutic means of work. Zen also spread in Protestantism as “Protestant Zen” as well as a part of universal philosophy, psychology, science and theology (Borup, 2015: 71-73)<sup>5</sup>. Today, Zen is the most widespread among ordinary people in Japan, but also in the West.

**Methodology and Methods.** What is zen? When talking about zen, it must be emphasized that it is not only the philosophy of Buddhism, but also a practice, and it can be said that Zen is based on life itself... In practice, Zen consists of *zazen* and *sansimompo* (listening to Zen teachers and accepting counselling), and these two aspects are needed to achieve awakening. There is actually a central “event” of awakening. Zen teaching says that there is a potential in every human being to achieve awakening, but that not every human being knows it. It is best to awaken her not by studying sacred texts, performing rites and ceremonies, or worshiping characters, but by suddenly breaking the boundaries of generally accepted, every day, logical thought. Awakening (*satori*) can be achieved through persistent training, which can best be transmitted from teacher to student.” (Višnjić-Žižović, 2019: 403). Zen masters do not talk much, they despise theorising and speculation, so they base their teachings on *Zen koans* that aim to stop the thought process and contribute to students’ readiness for a sudden mystical or spiritual experience. The perfection of Zen is also reflected in leading a spontaneous and natural daily life. The principles such as spontaneity and naturalness were certainly taken over from Taoism. Due to the idea that enlightenment manifests itself in everyday life, Zen has exerted an extremely strong influence on all aspects of the traditional Japanese way of life.

<sup>5</sup>Zen is Buddhist and Japanese, but it is also a spirituality that attracts many Western researchers. Although there is a difference between Zen spirituality and spirituality

in the Western sense of the word, there are also overlaps (Borup, 2015: 70).

There are various methods by which awakening is achieved, and it is precisely by these methods that the schools Zen have been distinguished. Over the centuries in Japan, different directions or schools of Buddhism have developed, and there are only three schools that belong to Zen Buddhism and they are *Rinzai*, *Soto* and *Obaka*.

**Research Results and Discussion.** *Zen buddhism schools.* One of the three most prominent schools of zen is *Rinzai* (called *Lin qi* in Chinese), which emphasizes the method of sudden shock and meditation on paradoxical statements (Japanese koan). It was brought to Japan in 1191 by a Japanese priest named Eisai Rinzai. The next school is *sōtō* (called *Tsao-tung* in Chinese) which leans towards the method of sitting during meditation (*Japanese zazen*). It was brought to Japan by Dogen (*Dōgen Zenji 1200–1253*) after returning from China in 1227. The third school of *obaku* (in Chinese *Huang-po*), accepted the methods of the Rinzai school, but practiced nembucu, meaning to invoke the name of Buddha Amida. This school was founded in 1654 by the Chinese monk Jin-yuan, who came from China. So, in Zen, it is important to try in any way to reach the “ultimate consciousness / reality”. This is achieved through meditation. “Meditation is considered an exercise of mental concentration that leads through the levels to the ultimate goal of spiritual liberation, or nirvana.” (Visnjic-Zizovic, 2019: 403). The founder of the first school, Rinzai, wrote down his most important lessons and sermons comprising the book “*Rinzairoku*” which has served to this very day as an important reading for the followers of Zen Buddhism (Kličković, 2014: 54).

In Japan, Eisaji (Myoanu Eisai, 1141-1215) is considered the founder of Zen Buddhism and of the Zen school of Rinzai. Zen teachers Shuho (*Soho Myocho, 1282-1337*), a Zen Buddhist teacher and calligrapher, as well as Musō (*Musō Kokushi, 1275-1351*), a Zen Buddhist teacher and creator of Zen gardens, are credited with achieving the specific Japanese identity, in separation from the Chinese Zen school. Thanks to them, the first-founded

school of Zen Rinzai reached its peak in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In this school, Zen teachers have used the following method of teaching: they would set a meditation puzzle known as *kōan*, i.e. the conversation between teacher and student is conducted in the form of questions and answers. “It is characteristic of *kōan* that there is no universal answer to the question posed, but by practicing the exercises, by composing paradoxical questions, the mind is trained so that it matures to a state of satori in which all its secrets are revealed”. (Pajin, 2013); (Koga & Akisige, 1989: 7-8). *Kōan* is a problem or subject to be studied, which seems unsolvable and a Zen student with the help of the teacher should find a solution for it. A student can return to the same *koan* more than once and it can be different for him or her every time (Ražić, 2015: 79). *Koans* are often presented in the form of unsolvable problems, meaningless to the intellect, and the essential element is usually some illogical or absurd procedure or word. The *kōan* requires the sitting position called *zazen*, which means that one should sit cross-legged in the deep silence of contemplation, yet this is not at all simple. Due to a certain amount of effort that *zazen* position involves, it was accepted in the samurai circles, helping the samurai in strengthening his character. Thus, *kōan* and *zazen* are the basic characteristics upon which the teachings of the *Rinzai* School in Zen Buddhism have been based. According to this school, while the student of the school is in the *zazen* position, enlightenment would come suddenly, at some point. The founder of the second Soto School, otherwise a student of Eisei, Dogen was also a reformer of Zen Buddhism. In his school, enlightenment came gradually, by sitting in the position of *zazen* in silence. Thus, it can be said that the schools of Zen Buddhism *Rinzai* and *Soto* have the same interpretation of Buddhism, but different ways of attaining enlightenment. The third school, known as *Obaka*, was the smallest branch of Zen Buddhism in Japan, developed only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, much later than the previous two schools. It did not reject the study of the *sutras*, yet it practiced zen and

*koan* as the way of attaining sudden enlightenment, invoking the Buddha's name (Koga & Akisige, 1989: 8-9).

*Zen teachers in Japan.* There were several prominent Zen teachers in Japan, and many lesser-known ones. The influential Japanese Zen teacher and Buddhist monk Dogen was born in Kyoto into a family of aristocrats. At the age of four, he learned to read Japanese and classical Chinese. Both of his parents died when he was little, and at that age he understood what the disappearance of life meant. He was raised by his uncle, who was a royal adviser, and who decided to offer him an excellent education. At the age of only nine, he read works of advanced Buddhist philosophy. At the age of twelve, he went to a Buddhist temple and dedicated his life to the teachings of Zen Buddhism and the search for enlightenment. He lived in China and studied Zen meditation there, gaining enlightenment. Very often he asked the question: "If all beings are endowed with Buddha nature, what is the point of practice and enlightenment?", and he always gave simple answers. He constantly emphasized that practice did not make the Buddha, nor did it turn human beings into a Buddha. For him, the practice of Zen was an expression of the manifestation of our enlightened nature, that is, the practice was the activity of enlightenment (O'Brien, 2021). He argued that the essence must be such that it can be expressed in words. However, the philosophical discourse developed by Dogen is today considered to be extremely incomprehensible. His claims include that man can reach the path of the Buddha, in his teaching man possesses the nature of the Buddha and mental functions that disturb his mind, and only in the last stage of progress is the Buddha's nature towards awakening realized (Kličković, 2014: 60). It implies that all beings search for the nature of the Buddha in one real place, "here and now", that is, in the present moment. He sought an "absolute affirmation" that denies renunciation, true understanding is not acquired by intellect, but by ascetic exercises (Koga & Akisige, 1989: 13-14); (Kličković, 2014: 60). All Buddhist schools grant him respect as a bodhisattva. He wrote

many instructive works, and his first literary work called "General Teachings for the Promotion of Zazen" (*Fukan zazen gi*, 1227) is actually an introduction to Zen practice. His main work is a collection of letters called "The Treasure of the True Eye of Dharma" (*Shobogenzo*, 1231-53), and is a masterpiece of religious literature in the world. He was writing it for more than twenty years, and the final version contains 95 chapters, in which he elaborates Buddhist principles. He practiced meditation in a cross-legged position known as the "lotus" (Dōgen, Japanese Buddhist monk, 2021).

Hakuin Ekaku-Zenji (1686-1769) was one of the greatest Zen teachers in Japan. He restored the *Rinzai* School in the 18th century and thus laid new foundations for Zen Buddhism (Hakuin, 2021b). At the age of fifteen, he joined a Buddhist monastery, where he perfected his meditation. "At the age of twenty-four, he had his first experience of enlightenment, which was preceded by vigorous and painstaking apprenticeship under the guidance of the old hermit and Zen master Ethan. He was the head of the monastery where he became a monk, in which he developed permanent meditation and renewed the strict spiritual training of "rinzai-shu". He settled permanently in 1716 near his birthplace, in the Shoinji Temple, which under his leadership became the strongest Buddhist stronghold of the Tokugawa period. In addition, he was engaged in painting and calligraphy." (Hakuin, 2021). His teaching on enlightenment was based on his personal experience. He attracted many students with his dedicated teachings, the gifts of a preacher, writer, poet and artist, but also with his philanthropy. He was undemandingly good, honest, with a lot of religious fervour, he won the hearts of all the people who came in contact with him. His teaching and enlightenment were based on a threefold mystical state through great doubt, great awakening, and great joy. His description of satori is especially impressive: "I slept day and night, I forgot to eat and stretch. Then a critical concentration suddenly occurred. It seemed to me that I was

freezing in a frozen field that was spreading indefinitely, while inside I had a feeling of complete transparency. I could neither go forward nor back. I was like an idiot, like a fool, and nothing else existed except *koans* ... My days passed in that state, until one evening the sound of the bell suddenly ended everything. It was as if a glass vase had broken or a jade house had collapsed. When I woke up, I felt ... that all my doubts, all my previous uncertainties had completely dissipated like a melting iceberg ... All past and present difficulties are no longer worth describing.” (Hakuin, 2021).

He envisioned the essence of Zen as a search for the Buddha who was persistent and unceasing, as well as the salvation of all people. He constantly emphasized the practice of *koans*. He turned the place where he was born, Hara, into the centre of Zen learning. His claim that “[t]here is a great awakening at the bottom of great doubt” is well known. He systematized the practice of *kōans* and initiated probably the most famous *kōan* in Zen, which reads: “What is the sound of clapping one hand?” He told his students not to be satisfied with the small achievements of enlightenment. After an illness, he began to attach great importance to health and physical strength in his Zen practice and he talked about strengthening the body by concentrating the spirit. He instructed people to focus on a moral and honest life, while relying on Confucianism and ancient Japanese Buddhist teachings. He lived in great poverty, preferring to live among the peasants (Hakuin, 2021a).

In the twentieth century, the most prominent religious-philosophical theorist of Zen, university professor, philosopher, psychologist, writer and translator was Daisetsu Teitarō Suzuki (1870-1966). He was a Japanese author of many books and essays on Buddhism, who managed to bring his interests in both religions and Eastern culture closer and explain them to the peoples of the West through books and lectures. This was especially true of Zen Bud-

dhim. He openly wondered if there was an experience that was universal for all mankind, beyond the comprehension of reason. One of his most famous works “Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis”, followed by “Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist” “Zen and Japanese Culture”, and “Essays on Zen Buddhism” (Suzuki, 2021). Suzuki strove to bring Zen teachings closer to the culture and thinking of the Western world (Shizuteru, 1999). The word spirituality (*reisei*) was probably first coined by Suzuki to describe a universal, authentic religiosity, but one that is outside of institutional religion, and distinct from otherworldly forces. This spirituality is based on each person's experience. Since then, the term spirituality, as well as the term spirituality, has been used more in Zen. The first is a popular expression, and the second is used by researchers. He also worked a lot on the comparison of Zen and psychoanalysis<sup>6</sup> (Borup, 2015: 74-76).

Zen Buddhism has also been studied by historians, so Hajime Nakamura, a Japanese historian of philosophy, made a comparative review of Eastern and Western philosophy in the ninth decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the backbone of the work involved the main common ideas of these two philosophical directions (Pajin, 2013: 36).

There are well-known collections of *koans* “Mumonkan” and “Hekiganroku” created during the Sung dynasty, and the interpreters of these works ask that we not imitate the enlightenment of our predecessors, but that we come to the immediate experience of enlightenment. In order to achieve their own enlightenment, they needed a teacher to guide them towards the awakening. It is said that a Zen *koan* cannot be read, but that one can participate in them, because with the living word one comes into doubt and the absence of thought, so that the whole world can be understood without division. This is achieved with the help of meditation.

*Meditation* – is a dive into the interior in order to realize the nature of things (object and

<sup>6</sup> Before that around 1910, psychotherapy was advocated by priest Hara Tanzan.

subject become one), but it is also the aspiration to establish a connection with the external or universal concept of God. In both cases, it is an attempt to turn theory into practice, and that is why it is a matter of practice, and in addition to descending into the interior, it is also an expansion towards the outside. Thus, the goal of Zen Buddhism is to attain knowledge of both the inner and outer world, and it is a misconception that practicing Zen Buddhism should mean withdrawing from the world and rejecting daily activities. The path of Zen points to spiritual union with everyone around us by overcoming spiritual boundaries, although a person may be alone in a space. Applying meditation does not necessarily mean loneliness, it can be practiced to awaken in everyday life, at work, in contact with people in order to better understand them, so to search for the Truth in everything. When talking about awakening, it can be said that in Japanese it means to become aware, to wake up. It is *Satoru*, which is actually an intuitive perception of reality, which stands in opposition to analytical or logical understanding. All opposites become harmonized as a whole, but it must be known that enlightenment must be experienced through a personal effort. Even if the teacher shows the way, the final action remains with the student. For these reasons, awakening (or sanctification) does not depend on anyone other than ourselves.

“Thus, the practice of Zen Buddhism is based on the personal efforts of an individual to persevere in the fight against his lower nature, which is based on the desire for life and possession of things, which binds man to the Wheel of birth and death. When one realizes one’s own nature, one sees the order of things and accepts things as they are. Thus, a person’s life is in harmony and happiness that can be achieved in every place.” (Višnjić-Žižović, 2019: 404-405).

Thus, Ražić (2015) concluded that meditation is not a matter of personal ego, but a way of searching to break through the boundaries of personal ego, and of one to become united with everyone.

“Enlightenment, therefore, is not something that is achieved, but something that is noticed - to notice the fact of one’s own existence means to be awakened to the supreme truth. Although Zen provides a precondition: the student of Zen must prove that he has united with the Buddha. According to Zen, the one must immediately transform oneself and become honest with oneself. Because of all this, the word is completely inappropriate because it expresses a subsequent opinion and interpretation of the doctrine, and not the truth itself. It can be used to persuade and explain, but the final expression must be supra-conceptual. Zen-Buddhist koans, in their origin, are the most common notes on the enlightening words and deeds of old teachers.” (Kličković, 2014: 59).

In Zen, an attempt is made to express an experience that was unspeakable until then, in words that should be acceptably reasonable. However, when translating Zen Buddhist thought into other languages, a “conceptualization of the essence of learning” is required, which is actually what the original Zen avoids. “In Zen Buddhism, beauty lies in simplicity and calm, in a sense of the all-encompassing harmony of things. It is a beauty that reflects peace and emptiness, which always dwells in the midst of constant changes. Man finds beauty in simple things: in rocks and water, in moss, plants, sand, ponds and small wooden bridges” (Ražić, 1985: 53).

*Zen as a way of counselling.* Those students who practice Zen do this with their teachers through counselling in a specific gym. This kind of counselling in Zen is called *sansimompo*, and the gym is called *soda*. Counselling in Zen is not of the therapeutic type, and it involves counselling in the broadest sense of the word, which includes the active level, the cognitive level and the orientation level. In Zen, the conversation between the teacher and the student in a Zen training centre is of great importance, as the student should in this way receive help through conversation, thus developing the ability to adapt to new circumstances. There are different models/methods of



working. There are nine groups of conversations:

1. Method of explanation – the “path” as it is explained.

2. Method of representation – the “path” as it is shown.

3. Method of contradiction – a logically contradictory problem is given. Awakening is accomplished without the aid of thought and judgment.

4. The method of causing confusion – awakening is achieved by closing the way in which the problem can be solved (by thinking).

5. Coercive method – not allowing a person to think, we release him from attachment to concepts and ideas.

6. The method of hitting and shouting – a monk gets hit and is shouted at, and these blows are often quite sudden and come at the moments when they are least expected. This sometimes causes a spiritual transformation.

7. The method of suggestions – is not a forced way, but a very natural method which suggests that a person should reject all concepts and wake up on the “path”.

8. By illuminating (or developing) the method, man is not only freed from attachment to concepts, but is encouraged to be awakened by the “path” itself.

9. The method of guidance is very different from the previous one. A person is guided by concepts until he naturally acquires the experience of incomprehensibility (Koga & Akisige, 1989: 14-15). In all these ways, a Zen student can be led to “awakening”.

The question justifiably arises of the goal of the application of *Zen*. The answer to this question is that there are three goals of *Zen* and they are:

1. To develop the ability to concentrate (*yoriki*). In this case, power appears when the spirit unites and focuses on one point with the help of *zazen* concentration. When this power is acquired, it can enable a quick reaction even in unexpected situations, and yet in accordance with the circumstances. The person who developed *yoriki*, no longer enslaved to passions and surroundings, rules himself and his life. A state

can be reached when the spirit is clear and undisturbed, like water. With regular exercise, *yoriki* increases, and may disappear if not exercised and if *Zen* is neglected.

2. The second goal is awakening (tent). It must be emphasized, however, that there are great differences from person to person in terms of the clarity, depth and completeness of this experience; and 3. The third goal is the realization of the supreme path in our everyday, but unrepeatable life (*mujodo no taigen*). This path is realized with the whole being and the whole mind during daily activities. The ego is rejected, the spirit is conscious, freed from the thoughts that defile the attainment of this stage, the pure essence is expressed. These three goals are inseparable and only thus form a whole (Koga & Akisige, 1989: 30-31).

The essence of *Zen* is to reach the power of the mind that makes decisions and eliminates all doubts (*egan*) and allows the world to be understood through it. Because important decisions are made at these times, going to a *Zen* teacher is an extremely important event in the life of a student (Koga & Akisige, 1989; 10).

“Buddha's nature is omnipresent, it is confirmed in man by every manifestation of sensory and physical action, such as the blink of an eye. The term ‘spirit of the teacher's arrival in the West’, although extensively translated into Serbian, in a very abbreviated classical Chinese style and adapted to the Japanese pronunciation reads *soshi sairai-i*, and is thus set in a far more concise form, in such a way that this formulation itself becomes a question and one of the main subjects of reflection in *Zen*. As the above example shows, Bodhidharma did not come to convey a new teaching, but to remind and point out the true human nature, always present” (Kličković, 2014: 58).

It is necessary to say something about the life and customs of a Buddhist monk in a *Zen* monastery. When a person wants to become a *Zen* Buddhist monk, he enters the temple. Upon entering the temple, a person must receive confirmation from his teacher that he has formally entered the Buddhist priesthood. This approach is called “*tokudosik*”. The student

must shave his head, put on a Buddhist robe (usually black, blue or red) and meditate in a sitting position with his legs crossed. Buddhist monks conduct their training in a special Zen centre, but Zen training today is not as difficult as in previous centuries. The monks' luggage is minimal, they have a big bamboo hat on their head and they wear white cotton leggings, they wear straw sandals and they carry a wooden box with them. The journey from monastery to monastery is called a pilgrimage, and when they enter a monastery, they sleep on a grassy bed and are kindly received, but they are often told that the monastery is overcrowded and cannot receive them as monks. The monks are not allowed to leave the temple then, and if they go anywhere they will not be received again. They have to wait at the gate of the monastery until they are received, and that is usually in the evening. When they go inside, they have to stay up all night in the sitting position of the Buddha. Those monks who are not received in the evening, remain in front of the monastery gate in the same position as the monks inside. The accepted monks receive a permit for training in the morning, which lasts for at least a week. In all Zen monasteries, all monks and teachers are engaged in certain work (alone) because an intellectual approach to life cannot solve all problems. A Zen teacher guides monks in manual work, in order to understand the sublimity of work and to rest from the meditation that is daily. It is also a way of coming to the truth, because in Zen, the truth can be known only if a man is imbued with "life" (Koga & Akisige, 1989: 7-9).

Lectures are a very important part of Zen, and monks enter the temple lecture room in complete silence when they hear the sound of the "little hubby". When they take their seat, the Zen teacher enters with his two assistants. Then the Zen teacher approaches the Buddha statue, incenses it, and mentions the builder of the temple, the great teacher and the author of the lectures. Each incense burnt was followed by a threefold adoration. Everyone present reads the short sutra three times, and this is followed by the beats of a wooden gong (*moku-*

*gjo*). Then the recitations of the founder are recited once. This ritual aims to calm the minds of those present, and only then does the teacher sit on a high chair facing the Buddha statue, one assistant brings him a cup of tea, the other puts it in front of him. Then the lecture begins, lasts longer than 60 minutes and ends with the reading of the four great vows of bodhisattva (*siguseigan*). After that, they return to their chambers. Monks are always engaged in *zazen*, except when having private conversations or working outside the building (Koga & Akisige, 1989: 9-10).

*Zen in the tradition and culture of Japan.* Specific Japanese cultural values represent common ideas, determining what is good, right, and desirable in a community. It determines the accepted behaviour towards others. The culture of a nation consists of "values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that have been learned and shared by a group of people and that enable them to see the world in the same way". (Garcia, 2015: 4-9). Zen Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism are religions that deal with present-day everyday life, and it is therefore difficult to distinguish between them, although the Japanese make a distinction through more rituals. Certain cultural values in business also come from these three religious traditions, according to which the Japanese evaluate the behaviour of their employees, as well as others. The Japanese people have a sense of belonging and homogeneity through social customs, not in terms of lifestyle. For Japanese society, the most important are 1. relations (should be harmonious); 2. preservation of personality; 3. self-control and self-discipline; 4. the importance of silence; 5. striving for perfection; 6. flexibility to adapt to change; 7. meaninglessness of words due to the passing of circumstances; 8. importance of circumstances; 9. harmony between group members; 9. belonging to a group; 10. social hierarchy and respect for age; 11. respect for social norms, acceptance of inevitable events; 12. Every person should have an important position in the family, community and society; 13. coping with death without fear (Garcia, 2015: 4-8). Zen is present in Japanese society

and culture through various rituals and customs. It is present in the way of building Japanese houses, i.e. in architecture, then in Zen gardens, in the tradition of growing tea and tea ceremony, making ikebana, samurai, fencing, music, fashion design, calligraphy, drama and art in general.

When talking about *Zen in architecture* – minimalism must be emphasized, which is an authentic Japanese aesthetic expression. It is the need for simplicity, conciseness, harmony, order and purity. “The ideal of simplicity in the Japanese tradition of architecture is specific – from the sanctuary of Ise (*Ise*) or the heroic simplicity of architecture and ritual as an aesthetic ideal, through the tea ceremony and the palace of Katsura Rikyu to today’s world architectural scene Tadao Ando. “Minimalism in architecture repects materialism and seeks spirituality as a new principle of progress, offering a sense of liberation from 'slavery' to material things.” In this case, minimalism brings us spiritual good, and has the significance of a view of the world. “Forms and lifestyles from more or less distant historical periods are separated from ideology and intellectualism. What connects them is simplicity as a leitmotif, where minimalism in architecture indisputably originates from the traditional Japanese architecture (Vasilski, 2010: 16, 32). Japan is known worldwide for respecting traditional customs and skills that are full of Zen aesthetics.

*Zen with samurai* – As samurai followed Zen teachers in large numbers, Zen is very present in the lives of samurai. Also, “Zen is a religion of will power, and will power is what warriors desperately need, although it must be enlightened by inner knowledge” (Suzuki, 2005: 58). The Japanese warrior has always been ready to resolutely follow his master, and this is known in Buddhism as the state of abandoning one’s ego, and this is where the religious meaning of the art of fencing begins. Zen is known to seek intuition, and repect rational and verbal intellect, and this has favoured warriors who show their strength in action. Zen is indifferent to life and death, and the samurai do not think much about it (Višnjić-Žižović, 2019:

405-406). Since the basic features of Buddhism are compassion and love, it may seem incredible that Zen influenced the warrior class in Japan. However, since Zen is a religion that teaches us to move forward and never look back once we decide on a direction, it is indifferent to life and death, so it provided passive support to the Japanese samurai in the moral and philosophical sense. According to Dejan Razić (1985), since Zen is a religion of the will, it resonated with samurai more morally than philosophically. The warrior mind, which is simple and not prone to philosophising, has found the right spirit in the intuitive Zen. The ascetic character of Zen also corresponded to the fighting spirit of warriors, because Zenist discipline is simple, immediate and is based on self-denial and self-reliance. The warrior always had to be directed towards one thing: to fight without looking back and always be ready to die (Višnjić-Žižović, 2019: 422). Suzuki (1992) also points out that one of the great advantages that the sword has over reading books is that, as soon as the wrong step is taken, the opponent is given a chance to win. “You have to be constantly vigilant here. Although readiness does not mean the pinnacle of fencing, it keeps us true to ourselves: that is, it does not allow us to engage in useless thoughts”. (Suzuki 1992: 84). “Zen puts emphasis on simplicity and self-control, on full awareness at all times and on calmness when one has to face death. Those ideas fit perfectly into the samurai way of life, in which a duel was always possible, and life and death were separated by only a single cut of a sword. Meditation made it possible for the samurai to calm his troubled mind, to perceive the final harmony in the apparent discord and to achieve the unity of intuition and action. (Višnjić-Žižović, 2019: 419-422). For these reasons, Thyssen Deshimaru claimed that Zen was the “religion of the samurai”/

*Zen in the culture of tea ceremony* – in Japan, the tea ceremony (*chanoyu, chado or simply ocha*), is actually a ritual of preparation and serving of Japanese green tea (*macha*). The tea ceremony was developed over the centuries to reach its peak in the sixteenth century and has remained in the tradition and life of the

Japanese to this day. It arrived to Japan from China, most likely in the early Nara period (710-794). In that period, tea was used because of its healing properties, but it was mostly used by nobles and priests. With the influence of priests on the development of Zen in the Kamakura period, the popularity of drinking tea began to grow, and its preparation at the court intensified. In time, in order not to lose the meaning of tea preparation, “the famous tea master Rikyu (*Sen no Rikyu 1522-1591*) after seven years of practice, brought certain rules and principles and directed the tea ceremony to its original purpose. Participants in the tea ceremony thus cease to be part of the great spectacle and have the opportunity to learn the deeper meaning of the tea ceremony. The Japanese tea ceremony, as it is known today, began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when a Zen Buddhist monk, a master of tea, gave Rikyu his own explanation of the “tea path”. Rikyu brought certain rules and principles that needed to be followed on the way to tea.” (Breščanski, 2020: 12). He set four principles: harmony – the connection between man and nature; respect – to everyone and everything around us; purity - which refers to the physical and spiritual sense of order; and serenity – a kind of feeling of peace with the prior fulfilment of previous principles. Everything related to the tea ceremony in the room must be made of natural materials, from bamboo, ferns and grass, and there are also plants. The tea ceremony involves examining the tea, but also the skills of preparing the tea garden, the tea room and the dishes, everything is sophisticated and requires full dedication to the ritual of tea making, which lasts about four hours. Symmetry and repetition of the colour and texture of the stone are avoided on the stone paths. Therefore, the garden is simple and elegant, in keeping with Zen Buddhist aesthetics. The tea room is not large, it is entered through a small door on the knees as a sign of humility. The most important in the room are the ikebana and the Zen scroll, which is in fact a calligraphic text that carries a message and helps the visitor to purify his thoughts before

the ceremony. Perfectly learned movements, devoid of redundancy, allow tea to be prepared with a lot of concentration, silence and serenity, giving the impression of spirituality. Even the choice of tea accessories is very important because it must be in line with the Zen aesthetics. The goal of the tea ceremony is to awaken consciousness and inner peace so that the soul is ready for the wisdom that needs to come. The calligraphic scroll serves the monks to convey their visions in an original way, and it is an example of the first creation of non-figurative art. For Zen monks, calligraphy was part of meditation. The brush stroke in calligraphy must be the result of complete concentration and Zen enlightenment. Calligraphic scrolls are made in a minimalist style, and the most common motifs are a circle (*ensō*) or Mount Fuji (Breščanski, 2020: 11-23).

*Zen in shaping ikebana and bonsai* – have a long tradition in Japan. Ikebana or “flower path” is a traditional form of flower arrangement, associated with the Zen tradition (“...initially it was associated with religious ceremonies in Buddhist temples. It became somewhat more popular in the 16th century, as arranging flowers for the tea ceremony”). (Maksimović, 2014: 232). The principle of beauty and transience permeates ikebana, suggesting that the world is constantly changing. It is the beauty of the moment, and ikebana teaches a person to recognize the value of life in all phases, and not just in the moment of climax. The most important is the existence of three lines from which the ikebana is composed, and they are the line of the sky (*shin*), the line of man (*soe*) and the line of the earth (*hikae*). They symbolize the interdependence and unity of spirit, man and earth. An odd number of branches are used, and even the ikebana bowl is used according to the *wabi-sabi* aesthetics, considering the brilliance, overcrowding and variegation inadmissible. In bonsai, Zen aesthetics also has a sense of connection with nature. Bonsai is a miniature plant in a pot, and it is made by shaping roots and branches, planted in a shallow pot. The basic

idea is to provide insight into the five elements: water, wood, metal, earth and fire. The tree must be shaped so that it looks older than it is, asymmetrical, but balanced. Human intervention should not be visible, and therefore the cultivation and nurturing of bonsai requires great patience, love and attention, involving, as in the ikebana, the principles of minimalism and transience (Breščanski, 2020: 11-23); (Maksimović, 2014: 232).

*The influence of Zen is also visible in the garden, known as the Zen Garden* – which is actually a Japanese landscape garden. Its main feature is that a whole well-organized and spacious landscape is condensed in a small space. The gardens are places for meditation, they consist of bridges (they lead a person from the real world to the spiritual world, they connect the worlds), islands, waterfalls, ponds of reduced dimensions. The main intention is to establish a balance between life and the aesthetic principles of Zen through simplicity. Here, every resident of Japan can find peace and respite from everyday life and reflect on achieving enlightenment. Among the oldest and most beautifully preserved gardens in Japan are Musō's Gardens. Zen garden is characterized by simplicity, suggestiveness and symbolism, and water is one of the most important elements, because it represents a vital element of life, enlightenment and purity and appears in the form of lakes (symbol of energy accumulation), rivers and waterfalls (symbol of energy flow). Water should have a calming and relaxing effect on a person, and pure and clear water represents the human mind during enlightenment. There are “dry gardens” (*Karesansui*) that are made only of sand, stone (stacked on top of each other in compositions of two, three, five or seven pieces) and moss, where sand and small gravel symbolize the flow of water, larger stons represent islands and mountains, and moss imitates forest. Here, too, asymmetry is noticeable, and the stones should give the impression of stable durability and strength (Breščanski, 2020:20-23).

*Zen is also present in Japanese sports* – in all kinds of traditional martial arts. In fencing (“sword path” or kendo martial art), it has always been associated with the nobility. The origin of swords is related to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the art of fencing has been brought to perfection. Zen masters gave their students the knowledge of sword techniques, but also knowledge of mental attitude and attitude towards death. There were many famous master swordsmen in Japan, among whom was Miyamoto Musashi, one of the most deserving for uniting the spirit of Zen and the spirit of the sword. The Japanese sword (*nihonto*) is one of the three imperial relics (besides jewels and mirrors) and one of the main symbols of the Shinto deity of the sun goddess Amaterasu (Višnjić-Žižović, 2019: 399-400). The Japanese path of the sword is not just a fighting technique, but a frequent way of life according to the Samurai code called Bushido. “the art of swordsmanship” is the oldest martial art of Japan and combines strength, skill and courage.” (Maksimović, 2020: 52). The Samurai Code was written under the direct influence of Zen Buddhism, Shintoism and Confucianism. For example, according to a Zen fencing, the most important thing is to acquire the mental attitude known as “immovable wisdom”. This means that the central point remains motionless, and the mind reaches the peak of speed (Suzuki & From, 1964; 172, 175).

*The Influence of Zen on Kaizen Management* – Kaizen management is actually the latest generation of Japanese management related to the company. “The very term kaizen comes from the two words kai – change and zen – good, and loosely translated it means changes for the better.” (Maksimović, 2014: 120). As an employed person, every day, you have to work on improving your business, personal and social life. In free translation, it means a change for the better. There are procedures that must be followed, along with order, speaking quietly to colleagues and politeness that must

be present when working at work<sup>7</sup>. (Maksimović, 2014: 120-132). Working in Japan has a key place in Japanese society, where every regular work is respected, and is the key to economic success. Apart from work, another important characteristic of the Japanese character is cleanliness. The purity of the soul (purity of soul and heart), the body and the environment are insisted on. Zen is the most keenly reflected in those small acts of love and kindness and courtesy. The Japanese strive to make their daily lives meaningful, beautiful and blessed (Ražić, 2015: 7-9).

**Conclusions.** Zen is the religion of Japan that rejects all that is superficial, verbal and superfluous. It arrived in Japan via China in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries it underwent changes, and has survived to this day. “Zen is one of the reasons why the Japanese management system is recognized as ideal and different from Western management because in addition to cultural factors, managers use their intuition and are sometimes more informal than their rivals”. (Maksimović, 2021: 196). The basic goal of Zen is self-knowledge, the search for truth in oneself. The central event in Zen is enlightenment. On the one hand it is religiously enlightenment, and on the other it is one’s own self-knowledge in order to understand one’s own nature for the benefit of the social community. Zen starts from the fact that people need each other, to love, respect and protect each other. The goal of Zen is to suppress hatred, anger, selfishness

and to develop kindness among people. Zen *kōan* is a kind of task that the Zen teacher passes on to the student, as a way for the student to remove intellectual limitations, cause a flash of sudden intuition and thus achieve enlightenment. Over the centuries, it developed in parallel with Buddhism and Shintoism. Originally Zen was the religion of the elite in Japan, and today it is the religion of ordinary people. There are three connected schools of Zen and they are *Rinzai*, *Soto* and *Obaka*, which have different methods by which awakening is achieved and it is precisely according to these methods that the schools of Zen have been distinguished. The founders of Zen are Eisai Rinzai, a member of the *Rinzai* School, Dogen, a member of the *Soto* School, and Jinyuan, the founder of the *Obaku* School. One of the greatest Zen teachers was Hakuin Zenji, who rebuilt the *Rinzai* School in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and thus laid new foundations for Zen Buddhism. In the twentieth century, one of the greatest teachers of Zen was Suzuki, who worked on the internationalisation of the idea of Zen, bringing Zen closer to other nations in the form of philosophy, psychoanalysis, belief and meditation. In this way, Zen came to the West after the Second World War, primarily as a philosophy, but also as a psychoanalytic therapy. In Japan, Zen influenced Japanese poetry and all literature, architecture, fencing and martial arts, landscape gardening, tea ceremony, flower arranging and painting. It influenced calligraphy, dramatic art, but also the warrior class (samurai) and their martial arts. Each of these arts in Japan is known as the ‘path’ (*do*) - the path to enlightenment.

<sup>7</sup> Understanding Japanese cultural values in business is very important for business cooperation to be successful. Japanese work culture is the result of a legacy of authentic society, religion, and accepted beliefs and values (Maksimović, 2021). During negotiations with Japanese business people, it is necessary to know the depth of certain actions that are related to the social customs and culture of Japan. Three characteristics of the Japanese way of doing business are extremely important, and they are: the importance of interpersonal relationships (the importance of trust, they feel more comfortable with

friends); the importance of avoiding direct conflicts and disputes; and the importance of written contracts. In addition to formal meetings, informal meetings also play a significant role in maintaining good relations with business partners, where there is an exchange of views, consultations. It is important to note that in Japan, contacts are not made directly, but the recommendation of a business partner or mutual friend is needed (Garcia, 2015: 8-9).

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